

1 Article

2 Social Customer Relationship Management and 3 Organizational Characteristics

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10 **Abstract:** Social customer relationship management (SCRM) is a new philosophy influencing the
11 relationship between customer and organization, where the customer gets opportunity to control
12 relationship through social media. The paper aims on (a) identification of current level of SCRM and
13 also on (b) influence of basic organizational characteristics on SCRM level. The data were gathered
14 through the questionnaire distributed in 362 organization headquartered in the Czech Republic. The
15 questionnaire comprised 54 questions focusing on the significance of marketing and CRM practices,
16 establishing a relationship with the customer, online communities, the use of social media in
17 marketing, and acquiring and managing information. The majority of questions were scalable and
18 used typical five-level Likert scale. Results showed that larger firms more often set up their own
19 online communities and manage them strategically, moreover they are able to manage information
20 better. Contrariwise, small sized organizations use social networks as a way to establish
21 communication with the customer more than large sized entities. Use of social media for marketing
22 purposes is significantly higher in organizations oriented on consumer markets than on business
23 markets.

24 **Keywords:** customer relationship management (CRM); social media; social CRM; customer
25 information, small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

26

27 1. Introduction

28 Today's relationship with the customer is much more influenced by a customer community
29 living on social networks. The way the relationship with the customer is built has changed over the
30 course of history. In this new environment customer can control his relationships with businesses as
31 well as gets power to influence others in his social network. Moreover, in understanding of
32 customers' actual needs, the social media are becoming a new phenomenon. The customer data are
33 becoming mainly collected via social media as Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter or/and blogs
34 and new term Social customer relationship management (SCRM) is used for distinguishing this new
35 approach [1;2;3]. Van Looy [4] describes SCRM as "multidisciplinary social media approach as it
36 involves all departments in the organization. Instead of only contacting people with sales offers, the
37 aim of social CRM is to build strong relationships with Internet users by giving them a positive
38 experience of the organization's brand, products, and services." At the end, SCRM turn such social
39 media relationships into loyal customers, which is the main goal, the product/service purchase has
40 the secondary role, only.

41

42 Huge shift from 'older' electronic CRM to 'newer' SCRM and the 'nascense of customer
43 management' is illustrated by Harrigan [5]. The customer has become not only an object for
44 measurement and assessment, but also the key player of relationship, every of his activity and
45 behavior is monitored online and in relation to his role in the community. Moreover, Osakwe et al.

46 [6] in their study implies that online retail brands should offer its products via social networking sites
47 and also endeavor to keep tracking these online users in the social media community to increase
48 affinity towards their brands. Recent studies [5;7;8] pointed out that that SCRM nature is often
49 affected by the organizational characteristics, mainly size and market orientation.
50

51 Although SCRM is already considered as a very effective marketing approach, primarily for
52 customer acquisition, we know just little about its application in the business sector in Europe and
53 even less in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC). Research studies investigating
54 businesses in CEEC [9; 10] tend to focus more on the traditional CRM approach than on SCRM.
55 Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to deepen the knowledge in this specific area for CEEC
56 region, specifically in the Czech Republic, and to identify how the character of SCRM is determined
57 by these facets of business. The paper also follows previous works of authors [11;12] in this field. The
58 question remains in what extent the companies are building such social communities and use them
59 in their CRM systems.
60

61 Harrigan and Morgan [5] argue that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) tend to build their
62 own online communities for customer communication, but less likely to participate in customer-
63 owned communities or to make up such communities for their use in marketing. However, the use
64 of these communities in larger corporation was not researched in deeper extent, yet. Therefore, the
65 first research question was determined as *“What is the level of building of own online communities and
66 participation in relevant customer-owned communities and what factors affecting it?”*.

67 The fact that SMEs do not sufficiently participate in communities created by customers goes
68 somehow against the idea of involving customers designed by Kumar [13], but can be explained by
69 lack of time on the side of SMEs. In general, SMEs tend to keep higher level of face-to-face contact
70 than larger corporations [14;15]. Moreover, the previous research underlined problems of SMEs to
71 keep strategic and long-ranged focus [15;16]. Therefore, can be assumed that proactive management
72 of interactions in communities and strategic approach to managing online communities differ
73 according to organization size. Therefore, the second research question was phrased as *“What is the
74 level of proactive management of interactions in online communities and strategic approach to online
75 communities and what factors affecting it?”*.

76 Findings of relevant studies show that social media are an important part of CRM business
77 processes in firms allowing them have interactions via marketing messages, decisions on products
78 and conversation in general [17;18]. At the same time can be assumed that social media will play a
79 role especially towards to final consumers as relationships with business partners have rather more
80 long-ranged and personalized character than online interactions in communities. Therefore, the third
81 research question was phrased as *What is the level of use of online communities as a way of engaging with
82 customers and what factors affecting it?”*.

83 Social media provide easily accessible customer data used for making strategic marketing
84 decisions [12;17;19]. Despite the fact that such data were always a ‘motor’ driving CRM, the social
85 media data are very different in their nature [20;21]. Moreover, such data are not only accessible and
86 created directly by customers, but also a real-time, ‘messy’ and difficult to be analyzed and quantify
87 [8;17]. Customer data collected on social media are mainly used for decisions in small and medium
88 enterprises and not by larger corporations. While SMEs are strong in customer communication, the
89 larger organizations are better in information aspects of CRM. Regarding to the market orientation,
90 the differences in use of social media can be assumed because various market orientations require
91 establishing of different customer relationships. Therefore, the fourth research question was phrased
92 as *“How organizations use social media in their CRM system to support marketing planning and budgeting
93 and also to analyze responses to marketing campaigns and what factors affecting it?”*.
94

95 Acquiring and management of information is vital for every organization conducting CRM. In
96 SMEs the social media data as number of likes, tweets, comments or posts are in general too messy
97 and thus left out of creation of real customer information and following marketing decisions [8;17].

98 Conversely, in larger organizations the constructs for obtaining the information and its integration
99 are made [16; 20]. Such data enabling the differentiation of every 'customer touch' which is also
100 a source of information [17]. Social media like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn can constitute a number
101 of touch points. In general, the SMEs do not perform more advanced levels in CRM data mining.
102 Carson [22] explains this by relatively small base of customers and huge number of day-to-day
103 decisions. Studies of Kumar and Harrigan, Ramsey, & Ibbotson [13; 7] found that SMEs have not tend
104 to use customer information for more complex calculations as lifetime customer value or the value of
105 customer's referrals to other customers. Therefore, the fourth research question was phrased as "*How*
106 *organizations collecting, integrating and using customer information and what factors affecting it?*".
107

108 2. Materials and Methods

109 The methodology of the paper follows up a previous studies [7;11;12] conducted in a given field.
110 The constructed questionnaire, partially tested in previous studies, comprised 54 questions divided
111 into five sections. Section 1 included questions on the importance assigned by the respondents
112 (businesses) to marketing and CRM practices, section 2 questions on customer relations, section 3
113 questions on online communities, section 4 questions on the use of social networks, section 5
114 questions on acquiring and managing information and finally section 6 questions on the
115 characteristics of businesses (market orientation, size, legal form). This article specifically deals
116 with sections 3, 4, 5, and 6. The majority of the questions were scalable and used typical five-level
117 Likert scale.

118 A sample of 362 respondents working in the same number of organizations participated in the
119 study. The data were collected from 248 SMEs up to 250 employees as well as 112 firms with over 250
120 employees during time period between December 2015 and January 2016. The questionnaire
121 distribution was conducted with use of 144 reporters (they encouraged organizations to participate
122 and be responsible in careful completion of the questionnaire by physical visit, phone call or an e-
123 mail alert). Research involved only organizations with the competence in the Czech Republic. The
124 sample represents 362 firms out of 905,706 organizations that are – according to Czech statistical office
125 – actively use social media (4.00 %). Majority (58.9 %) of examined firms focused on both business
126 and consumer markets. Approximately one quarter (25.9 %) of firms were oriented solely on business
127 markets, the remainder (11.7 %) solely on the final consumers.

128 Statistical significance of results was tested on the 5% level of significance. The statistical
129 software Statgraphics was used for statistical analysis. At first, the analysis of variance was
130 conducted. F-test to compare standard deviations and t-test to compare means was used. At second,
131 in case the standardized skewness and/or kurtosis was outside the range of -2 to +2 for 1 column,
132 which indicated non normality, the Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted and the medians instead of
133 the means were tested.
134

135 3. Results

136 This section may be divided by subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description
137 of the experimental results, their interpretation as well as the experimental conclusions that can be
138 drawn.

139 3.1. Building of online communities

140 Online communities exist in form of own communities (established and operated by
141 organization) or customer-owned communities. Results shown that *own communities* are more
142 frequent in larger firms with over 250 employees. In these larger organizations the mean value
143 reached 3.17 pts (on five-point Likert scale) and was significantly higher than the mean of smaller
144 organizations where value was 2.77 pts., only. The difference was found even higher for comparison

145 between organizations up to 50 employees and organizations with over 500 employees. Statistical
146 testing confirmed significant statistical variance in results according to firm's size (p-value = 0.00132).

147 Participation in *communities owned by customers* is more frequent in larger organizations, again.
148 However, the organization size, does not affect the engagement so much as in the previous case. Score
149 for larger organizations with over 250 employees reached 3.11 pts., while in organizations with up to
150 250 employees it was 2.87 pts. In almost one third of cases (30.1 %) respondents answered that they
151 are "not very sure" or they "nor agreed or disagreed". In this case, the differences in results were not
152 statistically significant.

153 3.2. *Proactive management of interactions in online communities and strategic approach to online*
154 *communities*

155 Similarly to previous organizational activities, *the proactive management of interactions in*
156 *communities* is rather domain of larger organizations. Average score in firms with over 250 employees
157 reached 2.61 pts., whereas 2.21 pts., in smaller organizations. Interestingly, the highest score was
158 found in organizations sized from 250 to 500 employees (32.4 % of respondents strongly or slightly
159 agreed), and not in the largest organizations with over 500 employees where about one fifth (21.3 %)
160 of respondents agreed. Differences in results were statistically significant (p-value = 0.00823).

161 *Strategic approach to management of online communities* was recorded rather in larger organizations.
162 Average score in organizations with over 250 employees reached 3.17 pts., while in smaller
163 organizations it is only 2.77 pts. This difference was proved as statistically significant (p-value =
164 0,00483). More than half (55.5 %) of the largest firms with over 500 employees agreed with this
165 assertion, while an agreement percentage in other size groups does not go over one third of
166 respondents.

167 3.3. *Online communities as a way of engaging with customers*

168 The relationships with the customer initiated via online communities is built more frequently in
169 organizations oriented to final consumers; an average score here reached 2.98 pts. Slightly lower score
170 was found in firms with hybrid orientation (focusing on both markets), it was 2.76 pts. The score was
171 significantly lower in organizations oriented to business market, it was 2.38 pts. The differences in a
172 use of online communities as a way of making relationship with customers according to
173 organizational size were not found.

174 3.4. *Use of SCRM system to support marketing planning and budgeting, analyze responses to marketing*
175 *campaigns, and to customize customer communication*

176 In only 140 (38.7 %) organizations from the sample was formally set up and used CRM system.
177 Therefore, as the number of respondents is lower, the results are interpreted directly according to
178 differences on the Likert scale, and not according to the average score made up of this scale.

179 In general, the firms do not *use social media in CRM systems to support marketing planning and*
180 *budgeting*; only about one quarter of all respondents replied that they use that for this purpose. There
181 are also some differences regarding the market orientation. Support of social networks for marketing
182 planning and budgeting is used mostly in companies with consumer orientation, where 36.4 % of
183 respondents agreed with this assertion. Vice versa, organizations concentrated on the business
184 markets use the social media in the CRM system for marketing planning and budgeting much less;
185 only 12.5 % of organizations agreed. The differences according to market orientation were found as
186 statistically significant (p-value = 0.00036). Detailed results are available in Table 1.

187 As similar to previous case, the differences in the use of *SCRM for marketing campaign effectiveness*
188 according to market orientation were found. Similarly, significant differences were found (p-value =
189 0.00048), the organizations with consumer focus use social media for this purpose much more than
190 organizations with business focus.

191 *SCRM as a factor enabling customization of customer communication* is not affected by the
192 organization size. In general, there were not important differences among larger and smaller

193 organizations found. Even the more detailed analysis of results, for example in comparison of groups
 194 of organization sized up 50 employees and ones with over 500 employees, have not proved any
 195 differences. Not surprisingly, the differences in use of social media for customized communication
 196 related to market orientation exist. Organization with focus on consumer market use social media for
 197 customized communication much more than those with business market orientation. While
 198 agreement average score in consumer oriented organizations reached 3.27 pts, in business oriented
 199 ones reached only 2.48 pts.; the differences are statistically significant (p-value = 0.01928).

200 **Table 1.** Use of SCRM to support marketing according to market orientation
 201

	Market Orientation			Total
	B2B	B2C	Hybrid	
<i>n</i>	40	11	89	140
1-strongly disagree	47.5%	9.1%	22.5%	28,6%
2-slightly disagree	27.5%	0,0%	22.5%	22,1%
3-nor agree or disagree	12.5%	54.5%	24.7%	23,6%
4-slightly agree	12.5%	27.3%	22.5%	20,0%
5-strongly agree	0.0%	9.1%	7.9%	5,7%

202

203 3.5. *Collecting, integrating, and using of customer information*

204 In general, a *regular collecting of customer information* is the most frequent activity associated with
 205 social CRM, as it received the highest level of agreement. Also, the results show obvious differences
 206 in firms affected by the organization size. Organizations with more than 250 employees reached
 207 almost four points' average score (3.95 pts.), while smaller ones reached only 3.43 pts score. The
 208 differences are statistically very significant (p-value = 0.00001).

209 *Integration of internal and external customer information* is also relatively very frequent in the
 210 examined organizations. In larger firms with over 250 employees the average value 3.63 pts was
 211 found, in comparison to smaller ones with average value 3.00 pts. The differences between these
 212 larger and smaller firms were found as statistically very significant (p-value = 0.00001). At higher or
 213 lower organizational size this difference further increases. Firms with over 500 employees were
 214 identified with such integration in more than half of firms. Vice versa, in firms with up to 50
 215 employees was an agreement percentage lower than one third.

216 *Using customer information to assess the lifetime value of customers* is more likely to be performed in
 217 organization with over 250 employees where an average score is 3.40 pts. On the contrary, the firms
 218 with up to 250 employees reached an average score 2.75 pts. only. The differences are statistically
 219 very significant (p-value = 0.000003).

220 Besides of mentioned, the *customer information can be used to measure the value of each customer's*
 221 *referrals to other customers.* The differences in use of customer information to measure the value of
 222 customer's referrals were found, however, the differences were not so strong as in previous cases,
 223 but still statistically significant (p-value = 0.02105). Larger firms with over 250 employees reached
 224 score 3.33 pts., while smaller firms received an average score 3.01 pts. Generally, we can say that
 225 probably firms have not too much experience with the calculation, as about one third of them does
 226 not favor neither to agree nor disagree with use of it.

227

228 4. Discussion and conclusion

229 Paper findings showed several insight to the field researched. Generally, the researched
 230 companies value the most areas as making an own online community, strategic approach to online
 231 communities management and involvement in interesting customer communities, where the score of
 232 agreement was the highest. General awareness of these topics is higher in larger organizations than
 233 in smaller ones. The organizations rather build their own online communities than participating in
 234 customer-owned ones, more typical it is for larger organizations. On the other hand, use of online
 235 communities as a way how to make a contact with a customer, is more frequent in smaller
 236 organizations. Presentation of interesting results related to organizational size is illustrated in Graph
 237 1.

238



239

240 **Graph 1.** Differences in online communities' management according to organization size.

241 Regarding the difference related to market orientation, the engagement with the customer via
 242 online communities is more frequent in the organizations focused on the final consumer market. In
 243 general, social CRM is used to support marketing planning and budgeting just a little. If so, the
 244 support is more significant in organizations oriented on final consumer markets, not on the business
 245 markets. Similar results exist for the use of social CRM for the purpose of marketing campaign
 246 analysis. Businesses oriented on the final consumers use social networks for CRM more frequently
 247 than organization with business market orientation. In general, companies collect customer
 248 information regularly as well as integrate internal information with information from external
 249 sources. Advanced calculations as measuring of customer life-time value or measuring the value of
 250 each customer's referrals to other customers is rather a domain of larger companies, the smaller ones
 251 use them just rarely. In this case, the findings of previous research of Kumar and Harrigan, Ramsey
 252 & Ibbotson [13; 7] were confirmed.

253

254 Regarding to size, the findings of this study are in contrast to Trainor et. al' study [23], where no
 255 significant association between SCRM capabilities and the organization size was found. Besides of
 256 this, the study findings can be, with regards to slightly different samples, compared with the research
 257 [7] conducted on the sample of British SMEs in 2014. Comparison shows that British organizations
 258 obtain higher scores in areas as establishing own online communities and proactive management of
 259 relationships in the communities; use of social media as a way to establish a relationship with the
 260 customer and customization of the communication. Those organizations also collect customer
 261 information more regularly and integrate information more often. Vice versa, Czech organizations
 262 are more engaged in the customer-owned communities and having more strategic approach in
 263 management of online communication.

264 Presented paper showed that SCRM practices are in many facets significantly affected by the
 265 organization size and organization market orientation. Next research in this field might be
 266 concentrated on other factors affecting the use of SCRM as number of marketing staff, business
 267 nature, outsourcing of SCRM activities and other research interests.
 268

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